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COUNTRY Yugoslavia

SUBJECT The Yugoslav Army in Connection with the  
NATO-Communist Conflict

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1. Purges of Cominform sympathizers are still being effected in the Yugoslav Army, especially among the officer class. Officers loyal to Tito live well, and give little thought to the future. The pro-Soviet group conceals itself in anticipation of a coup. Every army individual distrusts and despises the other. Mistreatment of soldiers under the guise of carrying out greater discipline has reached a maximum. All that was reminiscent of the USSR has been discarded from courses and lectures, and speeches of love for Tito, the Central Committee and of the Yugoslav Communist Party and its invincibility are greatly expounded. There is a serious lack of officers in the senior ranks since the arrest of numerous officers for harboring Cominform sympathies.
2. The state of alarm existing among political functionaries has now spread among the ranking officers of the Yugoslav Army. This situation has been augmented by frequent orders and commands which seem to prove that the political leadership of the country fears the outbreak of a war, i.e. that the Cominform will initiate an armed action. Pro-Cominform Yugoslav officers take advantage of this state of affairs, and present themselves as loyal to Tito, spreading meanwhile alarming rumors and creating confusion. Their action is directed against officers who are loyal to Tito, whom they denounce as having Cominform sympathies. Although in many cases these denunciations have proven to be unfounded, or the officer in question was successful in defending himself, many important superior officers, political commissars, and even UDB functionaries were removed as a consequence. Thus, a high ranking officer whose loyalty has been doubted is obliged sooner or later to give up his post.
3. There is less fear among military circles of an armed Soviet action than there is of an organized Cominform push. Some high ranking officers believe that Rankovic is responsible for the Tito-Moscow conflict and that, with the aid of the Cominform, he hopes to take over Tito's post. The case of Himmler who attempted to remove Hitler is often mentioned in connection with this.
4. The following developments are anticipated among experienced officers' circles:

a. In case of an organized Cominform push, Tito cannot rely upon

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the help of the population, since the latter is fully aware that Tito and the Cominform are one and the same thing. The army would doubtlessly side with the revolutionaries (pushists), with the exception of young Partisans, a portion of the KNOJ and a portion of the UDB. The KNOJ and the UDB would not be in a position to liquidate such a well-organized push, as the Cominform has even among them many followers. At any rate it is believed the common soldier would welcome such a coup (push) far more freely than an open conflict with the Soviets.

This assumption is based on the fact that armed units, sections of the Cominform, have already appeared on the Romanija, Jahorina and Sar Mountain. The first group of Cominformists (ten paratroopers) were thrown into the Ptuj-Slovenia sector in November 1949. Yugoslav officers who had earlier completed special courses for this purpose in Moscow act as leaders of these groups. Such parachuted groups are also to be found in Macedonia, in the Kajmakalan area. The groups are small but dangerous. They are active, well-trained, and at the given moment would serve as the basis for the formation of larger units.

- b. Armed action by the Soviet Union against Yugoslavia is considered a possibility. In this case little resistance is anticipated because of the fact that the Yugoslav Army is poorly armed (the majority of the weapons being of Soviet manufacture, for which spare parts and munitions are lacking). Nor would Tito have the support of the army for the soldiers do not wish to fight the Soviets. It is considered almost improbable that Tito would then attempt to organize a resistance as he did in World War II, since he presently lacks the main condition for such action, the support of the people.

5. Yugoslav officers do not consider that an open East-West conflict is probable at present. Loans sought by Yugoslavia from the West, and obtained in part, are considered as a reminder to the Soviet Union that the United States has interests in the Balkans also. Should an open conflict break out, officers believe the entire Yugoslav population would side with the power which would fight against Tito or the Soviet Union. The majority of the Yugoslav senior officer staff would side with the West. Cominform officers, or those known to be such, would most likely be liquidated by the soldiers. It is believed that in such a conflict Partisan activities of so-called "White Partisans" would take place, i.e. nationalists operating in the rear echelons of the Soviet front. This is believed possible only in the event of East-West conflict.
6. In the beginning of 1945 the Yugoslav officers staff was mostly composed of uneducated and untrained officers, former Partisans who for their wartime merits were given officer rank but who in technical experience were equal to the common soldier. Later on, a reorganization of the army took place when armaments and weapons poured in from Czechoslovakia and the USSR, and many young officers were sent to schools in these two countries. These measures were undertaken under the influence of Soviet instructors, as were later on the purges in the army. This first purge was carried out to the extent that it had bearing on "officers in the woods", under the excuse that they did not have sufficient technical training. The second purge was conducted after the Tito-Cominform conflict, for political reasons. In the latter case, the first to be purged were officers who were trained abroad and, to a smaller extent, officers who were denounced by others envious of their positions.

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7. As a result of these purges the senior officers' staff was greatly reduced, their lack seriously felt and the army began to deteriorate. In addition, Tito and Rankovic withdrew many capable officers into the KNOJ and UDB, so that at present the Yugoslav Army does not have a sufficient number of officers to conduct a war. Now without backbone, the Yugoslav Army lacks armament, a school for political training and does not have the power for an assault.

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